

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 404

Congratulating all member states of the International Commission for the International Tracing Service (ITS) on ratifying the May 2006 protocol granting open access to a vast archives on the Holocaust and other World War II materials, located at Bad Arolsen, Germany.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 13, 2007

Mrs. CLINTON (for herself and Mr. NELSON of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Congratulating all member states of the International Commission for the International Tracing Service (ITS) on ratifying the May 2006 protocol granting open access to a vast archives on the Holocaust and other World War II materials, located at Bad Arolsen, Germany.

Whereas, for the past 62 years, until November 28, 2007, the International Tracing Service (ITS) archives located in Bad Arolsen, Germany remained the largest closed Holocaust-era archives in the world;

Whereas, while Holocaust survivors and their descendants have had limited access to individual records, reports suggest that they faced long delays, incomplete information,

and even unresponsiveness when they tried to access the materials in the archives;

Whereas the 1955 Bonn Accords established the International Commission (on which 11 member nations sit: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States) responsible for overseeing the administration of the ITS Holocaust archives, which includes 17,500,000 individual names and 50,000,000 documents;

Whereas, until ITC received the ratification of the 2006 amendments to the Bonn Accords from the last remaining member nation on November 28, 2007, the materials remained inaccessible to researchers and research institutions;

Whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Director of the ITS, who is an ICRC employee, oversee the day-to-day operations of the ITS and report to the International Commission for the ITS at its annual meetings;

Whereas the new International Committee of the Red Cross leadership at the ITS should be commended for their commitment to providing expedited and comprehensive responses to Holocaust survivor requests for information, and for their efforts to complete the digitization of all archives as soon as possible;

Whereas, since the inception of the ITS, the Government of Germany has financed its operations;

Whereas, beginning in the late 1990s, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Holocaust Museum), Holocaust survivor organizations, and others began exerting

pressure on International Commission members to allow unfettered access to the ITS archives;

Whereas, following years of delay, in May 2006 in Luxembourg the International Commission of the ITS agreed upon amendments to the Bonn Accords which would grant researchers access to the archives and would allow each Commission member country to receive a digitized copy of the archives and make them available to researchers, consistent with their own country's respective archival and privacy laws and practices;

Whereas the first 3 Commission member states to ratify the amendments were the United States, Israel, and Poland, all 3 of which are home to hundreds of thousands of survivors of Nazi brutality;

Whereas the Holocaust Museum has worked assiduously for years to ensure the timely release of the archives to survivors and the public;

Whereas the Department of State has been engaged in diplomatic efforts with other Commission member nations to provide open access to the archives;

Whereas the House of Representatives unanimously passed H. Res. 240 on April 25, 2007, and the United States Senate passed S. Res. 141 on May 1, 2007, urging all member countries of the International Commission of the ITS who have yet to ratify the May 2006 amendments to the 1955 Bonn Accords to expedite the ratification process, to allow for open access to the archives;

Whereas, on May 15, 2007, the International Commission voted in favor of a United States proposal to allow immediate transfer of a digital copy of archived materials to any of the 11 member states that have adopted the May

2006 amendments to the Bonn Accords, and thereafter, transfer of materials to both the Holocaust Museum and to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel, was initiated;

Whereas, while it is not possible to fully compensate Holocaust survivors for the pain, suffering, and loss of loved ones they have experienced, it is a moral and justifiable imperative for Holocaust survivors and their families to be offered expedited open access to these archives;

Whereas time is of the essence in order for Holocaust researchers to access the archives while eyewitnesses to the horrific atrocities of Nazi Germany are still alive;

Whereas opening the historic record is a vital contribution to the world's collective memory and understanding of the Holocaust and ensures that unchecked anti-Semitism and complete disrespect for the value of human life—including the crimes committed against non-Jewish victims—which made such horrors possible are never again permitted to take hold;

Whereas, despite overwhelming international recognition of the unconscionable horrors of the Holocaust and its devastating impact on world Jewry, there has been a sharp increase in anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial across the globe in recent years; and

Whereas it is critical that the international community continue to heed the lessons of the Holocaust, one of the darkest periods in the history of humankind, and take immediate and decisive measures to combat the scourge of anti-Semitism: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

1 (1) commends in the strongest terms all nations
2 that worked expeditiously to ratify the amendments
3 to the Bonn Accords to allow for open access to the
4 Holocaust Archives located at Bad Arolsen, Ger-
5 many;

6 (2) congratulates the dedication, commitment,
7 and collaborative efforts of the United States Holo-
8 caust Memorial Museum, the Department of State,
9 and the International Committee of the Red Cross
10 to open the archives;

11 (3) encourages the United States Holocaust
12 Memorial Museum and the International Committee
13 of the Red Cross to act with all possible urgency to
14 create appropriate conditions to ensure that sur-
15 vivors, their families, and researchers have direct ac-
16 cess to the archives and are offered effective assist-
17 ance in navigating and interpreting these archives;

18 (4) remembers and pays tribute to the murder
19 of 6,000,000 innocent Jews and more than
20 5,000,000 other innocent victims during the Holo-
21 caust by Nazi perpetrators and their collaborators;
22 and

23 (5) must remain vigilant in combating global
24 anti-Semitism, intolerance, and bigotry.

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